

2 Grand Cru

TUESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2018

Barbeito



Madeira, the wine, was born of location and circumstance. The Madeira archipelago is located right where the Atlantic streams break westward, making it a useful port of call for America bound ships. Wine was the drink of choice, for sailors and traders, so vineyards were planted. To survive the long trip, the wines were fortified. The heat in the ships' storage transformed the flavors of the wine, it was discovered, and the style was finalized. I suppose the effect of heat and fortification would have been discovered elsewhere, but Madeira is where it became renowned.

Few Madeiras have been imported to Israel. Last year, Eyal Mermelstein started importing one of the historical houses, Barbeiro. This is a review of three non-vintage wines, fairly priced for the quality and interest value.

Island Rich Sweet 5 Year Old

This is made of the Tinta Negra grape and is matured in a stable temperature. It smells and tastes like liquid pecan pie, with an enticing touch of salt that ensures I come back for another whiff and another sip. A pretty digestif. Not very complex, but very pretty.

Verdelho 10 Years Old Reserve

Despite being vinified and labeled as a drier wine, it's still not a table wine, but rather a digestif/appretif like the Island Rich. It's more pungent, the aromas and flavors more focused and fresher. There's a fruity acidity



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Useful Information

I usually quote prices in NIS (New Israeli Shekels). The current exchange rate is 1 USD = 4 NIS.



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in mid palate that resolved in a salty finish. Think salted cashews. Turned into liquid pie.

I want to make a comparison with Sherry before I go on to the next wine. Sherry is my first love in fortified wines. All the different style - sweet or dry, oxidized or raised under the *flor* yeast - have a trademark iodine-like tang that is unique and almost impossible to emulate. Great vintage Ports have the advantage of massive fruit and tannins (not to mention the decades of slow simmering maturity in the cellar required to get them at their best), but, to me, few things can compare with the marriage of roasted, caramelized nuts and cured, briny meat and iodine.

And yet... Madeira... While I miss sherry's rust and brine, and the complexity they add, these Barbeitos have a similar *rancio* tang and there's an undercurrent of succulent, mandarin orange flavors that make the sour sweet finish addictive.

Definitely a wine I need to explore in greater breadth and depth.

Malvazia 10 Years Old Reserve

This is the best of the trio, the most pungent and intense, the most complete and characterful. It's not easy to write comparative tasting notes for these wines. They're too much of a piece and the descriptors are too similar. So, unless I resort to scores, I'll have to be creative about putting across how I feel about the Malvazia. Let's just say that of if the first two were an excellent *amuse bouche* and starter, this is the chef's masterpiece, a wine I drank over the course of a week without losing the initial post-coital bliss.

Posted by [2GrandCru](#) at [12:00 AM](#)



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